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This service distributes news and information to Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees, and retired Navy and Marine Corps families. Further dissemination of this e-mail is encouraged.

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MN970503: VA, DOD Agree On Pre-Discharge Exams For Disability Claims

WASHINGTON -- A new agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) allows separating or retiring service members expecting to file a claim for VA disability compensation to undergo a single physical exam prior to discharge.

When fully implemented, the new national policy will meet VA requirements for claims determinations and DOD's needs for a separation medical examination. The new policy will be phased in as soon as possible while details are worked out at the local level.

Previous procedures required two separate examinations several months apart. Until now, military personnel had to get a DOD physical exam prior to discharge from active duty. Because of differences between VA and DOD protocols, these personnel then usually had to undergo a second exam by the VA after filing claims for disability compensation. The results of these examinations are a determining factor in eligibility for VA health care.

VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer said, "This change will help us avoid unnecessary or redundant physical exams, improve the quality of the examination process and improve service for separating personnel by eliminating

lengthy delays in claims decisions and health-care eligibility determinations. We are hopeful the new policy also will enhance ongoing efforts to reduce the time it takes to process compensation claims, and further, it should reduce costs."

DOD Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. Edward D. Martin said, "By reengineering the system to require only one physical, we are making life easier for our beneficiaries."

In pilot tests of the dual-purpose exam at VA and Army facilities, claims processing time was reduced to less than one-third of national levels under the existing system. The current national average for processing an original compensation claim is 133 days.

Under the new policy, VA physicians generally will conduct the pre-discharge exams. In areas where VA physicians are not available, DOD physicians will conduct the exams according to VA protocols.

Courtesy of DOD Public Affairs

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MN970504: Retiree Day Offers Dental Care in Europe

NAPLES, Italy -- Several dental clinics in Europe decided to make the good will of the holiday season begin by making Veteran's Day - "Retiree Day."

Normally, retirees take a back seat to active-duty service members and their families to be seen for dental care.

Retiree access to military dental clinics is very limited due to Department of Defense mandated active duty dental readiness requirements. The mandate states that there is no retiree space available care unless active duty dental readiness has reached the 95 percent standard.

Retiree Day was a day for retirees to get an appointment to take care of dental concerns that could be handled in one appointment.

Retirees were able to get fillings, cleanings, X-rays, root canals, tooth extractions, and oral surgery. Work that would require follow-up appointments such as dentures still had to be done through civilian dentists.

"Normally, I'd have to take a whole day of sick leave just to sit and wait to see if I could get in," said Steve Johnson, a retired Navy storekeeper, visiting the Naples clinic. "You can see these people are overworked and short staffed. I'm just glad they did this for us."

Naval Dental Center Europe officials said the retiree day was a hit in each of the clinics where it was offered.

"We had a tremendous response in Rota, Spain and Naples, Italy where the retiree populations are the largest and the most vocal. This was kind of an experiment, and it seemed to go very well," said a dental center Naples, Italy spokeswoman.

Clinics in Portugal; St. Mawgan, England; La Maddalena, Sardinia; and Gaeta, Italy, did not offer the special appointments because their readiness level allows them to see retirees on a space available basis.

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MN970505: Acute Care Clinic Added At Pax

PATUXENT RIVER, MD -- Naval Hospital Patuxent River has opened an acute care clinic (ACC) to bring additional health care to the deckplates for their customers.

The ACC is designed to augment the services provided by military medicine, pediatric and family practice clinics, internal medicine and general surgery. The clinic is intended for patients with minor illnesses, cuts or abrasions, flu symptoms, twisted ankles, and ear pain.

"We are designed to take care of acute symptoms. Symptoms occurring, normally, under 72 hour duration," said Donna Waybright, acute care clinic nurse manager. Symptoms that have been present for more than 72 hours should be seen at the family practice care clinic.

Staffed with an appointment clerk, two registered nurses and a physician, the clinic sees an average of 36 patients daily. Patients are able to make same day appointments. All appointments are seen by the physician every 20 minutes from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The clinic is also open on weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. "We have one walk-in slot per hour that is strictly for patients with an urgent need such as, lacerations, broken bones or a nose bleed," said Waybright.

The ACC is committed to providing accessible health care for its customers.

By Kimberly Allen Rawlings, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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MN970506: Jacksonville Scores High On Hospital Inspection

JACKSONVILLE, FL -- Naval Hospital (NH) Jacksonville and its Branch Medical Clinics were awarded full accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) after an intensive three-day inspection last month.

The Joint Commission is a private, not-for-profit organization and is the leading health care accrediting body in the world.

The team of inspectors measured NH Jacksonville's compliance with nationally established Joint Commission standards and validated the hospital's commitment to quality by awarding a final score of 91 out of 100 points.

"The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations is one of the most important surveys that a medical facility can go through. They tell us what we are doing right and what we can do better, allowing us to provide the highest quality care to our patients," said Capt. Milt Benson, commanding officer of NH Jacksonville. "The fact that we received such outstanding results is a good indication that we have superior people working here and that we are delivering high quality medical care," Benson continued.

Although NH Jacksonville staff have always been confident that the medical care they provide is excellent, the JCAHO inspection results are just one more indication that Navy

medicine is equal to, if not better than, care in the civilian community.

"I know the whole staff really cares about our patients, and it feels good to be recognized for our efforts," said HM3 Gail Owens, surgery clinic. "I think our patients can rest easy knowing the Navy provides the best in quality health care!"

By LCDR Karen Schaffer, Naval Hospital Jacksonville

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MN970507: December Liberty/Leave Policy Announced

WASHINGTON (NWSA) -- The Office of the Secretary of the Navy released the following message to military and civilian workers in the Department of the Navy:

President Bill Clinton has issued an executive order to excuse all federal employees from duty for the scheduled workday on Friday, Dec. 26, 1997, except those who cannot be excused for reasons of national security, defense or other public reasons.

Commanders, commanding officers and officers-in-charge will excuse personnel except those required under the circumstances cited above.

Navy civilian employees should be awarded "use-or-lose" leave scheduled for Dec. 26. This leave must be rescheduled or forfeited if not used prior to the end of the leave year (Jan. 3, 1998). Leave forfeited under these conditions cannot be restored. As Dec. 26 is being treated as a holiday, employees on a compressed work schedule whose non-work day is Dec. 26 must receive an "in lieu of" holiday on the preceding workday. Since Dec. 25 is also a holiday, the "in lieu of" holiday for these employees is Wednesday, Dec. 24. Activities may designate an alternate day within the pay period as the "in lieu of" holiday to prevent an adverse impact on operations.

This season is a well deserved opportunity for our Sailors, Marines and civilians to enjoy fellowship and holiday spirit knowing that our Navy has contributed in full measure to peace and goodwill throughout the world. In the "right spirit," have a safe and happy holiday.

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MN970508: New Clinic Building Named After Medal Of Honor Winner

Chesapeake, VA -- A new medical and dental building has been named in tribute of Medal of Honor recipient Captain William L. McGonagle, retired.

McGonagle earned his Medal of Honor as commanding officer of USS LIBERTY (AGTR-5) when attacked by the Israelis during the Six-Day War in 1967.

The building was erected for Naval Security Group Activity Northwest in Chesapeake, VA and was dedicated on December 5.

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MN970509: Award Winners Reflect Strong Navy Leadership

The American Academy of Medical Administrators (AAMA) only recognizes the best leaders in health care. The 1997 AAMA Awards Committee has cited the outstanding leadership abilities of three Navy officers at its annual convocation ceremony in Orlando, FL.

LCDR Jack R. Rumbaugh, MSC, received the Harry S. Shubin Statesman in Healthcare Administration Award. This award is given to an individual who has made significant innovative contributions in the health care field. Lieutenant Commander Rumbaugh is assigned as the Deputy Director for Mobilization and Planning at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) in Washington, DC.

CAPT Arthur W. Casper, MSC, was recognized as the State Director of the Year for his leadership and outstanding performance as State Director of California. Captain Casper is the Director of Administration, Naval Medical Center, San Diego, CA.

CAPT Margaret J. Nation, NC, received the 1997 AAMA Distinguished Service Award for her outstanding service to AAMA. Captain Nation is the Senior Vice President, Capital Health Services, Fairfax, VA.

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MN970510: TRICARE Q & A

Question: I'm a retiree who lives in Michigan during the summer and Florida in the winter. Which of the three TRICARE options is best for my wife and me?

Answer: For a retiree with two residences, probably the best options, in terms of practicality and flexibility, are TRICARE Standard or TRICARE Extra.

With either of these options, you have a choice of civilian providers, and there's no primary care manager to contact for approval for specialty medical treatment.

Additional information on TRICARE and your military health care benefits is on the Department of Defense Health Affairs home page on the World Wide Web at www.ha.osd.mil.

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MN970511: Don't Be a Stuffed Turkey!

The Holiday season is here and with it comes many parties, family gatherings and special meals. The season also brings the opportunity to gain unwanted pounds. Instead of swearing off all high fat foods or eating everything because it is a special time of year, why not switch gears. Challenge yourself to maintain your weight through the season.

Try these tips to help you get through the season without feeling like a stuffed turkey.

Allow yourself a serving from one higher fat dish at a meal or party. When bringing a dish to a party make yours healthy so you have at least one to choose from.

If at a party where a buffet is served, be last in line.

Carry two drinks, making it more difficult to carry a plate.

Drink a diet soda or a large glass of water before you

go, as your body does not know the difference between thirst and hunger.

When arriving at a party plan to talk to five people before heading for the food.

When preparing a large dinner, make one of the dishes low fat.

When eating at a buffet, fill your plate with fruit and vegetables first.

Go for an extra walk the day of a party or dinner.

If there are foods at a party that you always have access to, save the calories for foods you never have.

Have a small snack before you go, so you do not arrive ready to "chow down."

Have a plan for your party or dinner, by visualizing yourself in these situations. Prepare yourself to handle the occasion more effectively when you arrive!

Keep in mind "5-A-Day," there will be a lot less room in your stomach for other things.

Ask yourself: How do I want to feel? I know the food will taste good, but how will I feel afterwards if I overeat? How will I feel if I eat in moderation?

By K. L. Moe, Registered Dietitian, UNSH Yokosuka

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail <mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil>, telephone 202/762-3218 (DSN 762-3218), or fax 202/762-3224.